SENATE, No. 2862

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED AUGUST 27, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes a Gun Court Pilot Program in Mercer County.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT establishing a gun court pilot program.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that the use of guns in the commission of violent crimes exposes the citizens of this State, especially citizens of urban areas, to increasing peril. Because of the hazards posed by criminals who use guns and other dangerous weapons in the commission of crimes, it is fitting and proper that a special court with judges knowledgeable in criminal law and procedure, particularly in relation to violent crime, be established to adjudicate these cases with expediency. Establishing a Gun Court Pilot Program in Mercer County will provide information concerning the advantages of operating a specialized court to deal exclusively with crimes committed with guns and other dangerous weapons and the feasibility of expanding such a program to the courts in all the counties of this State.

2. a. There is hereby established a three-year "Gun Court Pilot Program" in the Superior Court in Mercer County. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall be responsible for administering the program.

b. The court may refer any criminal case where a gun or other weapon was used in the commission of the crime to the Gun Court.

c. Judges assigned to the Gun Court shall have extensive knowledge of and experience in criminal law, criminal procedure, and criminal sentencing, particularly in relation to violent crime.

3. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall monitor the Gun Court and report to the Legislature 12 months after the organization of the pilot program and within six months after expiration of the pilot program. The reports shall include the impact of the pilot program on criminal sentencing and the court's calendar and workload. The reports also shall evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and recommend whether the program should be continued or expanded.

4. The Supreme Court of New Jersey may adopt court rules appropriate or necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the third month after enactment and shall expire three years after the effective date.

STATEMENT

This bill creates a three-year Gun Court Pilot Program in the Superior Court in Mercer County.

Under the provisions of the bill, the Administrative Office of the Courts would administer the program. Any criminal case where a gun or other dangerous weapon was used in the commission of the crime could be referred to the Gun Court. Judges assigned to the Gun Court are to have extensive knowledge of and experience in criminal law, criminal procedure, and criminal sentencing.

The Administrative Office of the Courts is to monitor the Gun Court and report to the Legislature 12 months after the organization of the pilot program and within six months after its expiration. The reports are to include the impact of the pilot program on criminal sentencing and the court's calendar and workload. The report also would evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and recommend whether the program should be continued or expanded.